

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

CONTEXT : At present ,the number of women representatives in parliament is still considerably small.

About

- India held its first Parliamentary session in 1952 with 39 strong, intelligent, and passionate women leaders challenging a centuries-old tide of men's dominance over the polity.
- At a time when women formed only 1.7% of the total members of the United States Congress and 1.1% of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, India was leading the way in the fight towards more inclusive world democracies with 5.5% women representation.
- Despite an encouraging start in the 1950s in inclusivity, its discourse, communication and laws now are a concern

Reasons Low Participation Of Women

- **Lack of Neutral acts**
 - In the last decade, there have hardly been any gender-neutral Acts.
 - Acts have made references to women not as leaders or professionals (such as policemen), but usually as victims of crimes.
- **Lack of confidence and finance:** They were the other major deterring factors that prevented women from entering politics.
- **Illiteracy:** It is one of the main hurdles in making women politically empowered. Women candidates have less education and experience, on average, compared to male candidates
- **Gender Disparities:** Gender inequalities in terms of education, ownership of resources and continual biased attitudes still act as barriers for women leaders.
- **Societal and cultural norms:** They are imposed on women bar them from entering politics.
 - They have to accept the dictates imposed on them and bear the burden of society.
- **Sexual division of labour:** A system in which all work inside the home is either done by the women of the family or organised by them through the domestic helpers.
 - It means that women spend far more time than men in the home- and child-care.
- **Slander and abuse:** This is one of the main reasons that women stay away from contesting elections which they face during campaigns. The other reason cited is lack of safety.
- **Not gender neutral language**
 - In the Rajya Sabha, the Rules of Procedure continue to refer to the Vice-President of India as the ex-officio Chairman, stemming from the lack of gender-neutral language in the Constitution of India.
- The alarming degree of usage of masculine pronouns assumes a power structure biased towards men.

Safeguards available and Government's efforts in this direction

- The Women's Reservation Bill(2008)(108th amendment) has also been introduced in the national Parliament to reserve 33 per cent of the Lok Sabha seats for women
- In addition to this, Article 46 imposes a duty on the state to protect weaker sections from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Article 14, which established the right to equality as a fundamental right, inevitably mandates for equal opportunity, which is reflected in Article 15(3).
- India is a signatory to the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which obliges states to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and, in particular, to ensure that women are as eligible as men to contest elections to all public bodies.

- They have the right to participate in contributing to government policy and its implementation.
- Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is binding on signatory states including India, says that “every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections
- In 2014, under the leadership of the then Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Meira Kumar, the Rules of Procedure of the Lok Sabha were made entirely gender neutral.
 - Since then, each Lok Sabha Committee Head has been referred to as Chairperson in all documents. This initiative is proof that amending legal documents to make them inclusive for all genders is an attainable goal if there is a will.

Conclusion & Way Forward

- Equal participation of men and women is not only a prerequisite for justice and democracy, it is an inevitable condition for harmonious human existence as well.
- The issue of gender-based violence and provision of safety and security of women should also be addressed on a priority basis to promote gender equality in the social and political arenas.
- It is the need of the hour in a country like India to have equal participation of all the sections of society in mainstream political activity therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.
- Considering legally-backed youth and women quotas reserved for youth and women or a specified proportion of young candidates all registered parties contesting an election must field.
- Society needs to deconstruct the stereotype of women as limited to household activities only.
- In the 21st century, when people of all genders are leading the world with compassion, strength and ambitions, the Indian Parliament needs to reflect on its standing.
 - Recognition and correction of past errors through amendments to rulebooks, laws, and the Constitution are just starting points, and must lead to sensitivity, equal treatment, and appreciation for the people of India, regardless of gender.

PRELIMS

1. Draft National Data Governance Framework Policy

Recently, the draft plan on the **National Data Governance Framework** was released by the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**.

Draft National Data Governance Framework Policy (NDGFP)

- **Focus of the Policy:**
 - The draft policy focuses on improving the institutional framework for:
 - Government data sharing,
 - Promoting principles around privacy and security by design, and
 - Encouraging the use of anonymization tools.
- **Aim:**
 - To standardise the government's data collection and management while catalysing AI and Data led research and a startup ecosystem.
- **India Data Management Office (IDMO):**
 - The draft includes plans for setting up the India Data Management Office (IDMO) on the lines of the US Federal Data Management Office.
 - IDMO will be set up under Digital India Corporation for framing, managing and periodically revising the policy.
- **Data Management Units (DMUs):**
 - As per the draft, all ministries will have data management units (DMUs)
 - DMUs will be headed by a Chief Data Officer.

- They will be responsible for the implementation of the data governance policy.
- **Sharing of data:**
 - The policy also seeks to 'encourage' private companies to share non-personal data with startups as part of the effort.
 - IDMO shall notify protocols for sharing of non-personal datasets while ensuring privacy, security and trust.
 - IDMO will notify rules to provide data on priority/exclusively to Indian/ India-based requesting entities.

Draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy 2022

- Earlier the Centre released the draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy 2022.
- **Issues:**
 - However, it was criticised by internet activists and civil society members over its bid to monetise non-personal data gathered from citizens.
 - Under fire, the government later rescinded the policy and unveiled the new framework in May this year under the new name, NDGFP.
- **Changes:**
 - The new framework has skipped the contentious clause that allowed the sale of data collected by the government in the open market.

2. Criminalization of Politics

According to a National Election Watch and Association for Democratic Rights (ADR) survey, 40 percent of the newly elected members have declared criminal cases, while 12 percent have serious criminal cases pending against them.

Criminalization of Politics

- The criminalization of politics means the participation of criminals in politics.
- It means that persons with criminal background contest in the election and get selected as a member of parliament or state legislature.
- **Reasons for Criminalisation of Politics:**
 - **Lack of Political Will:** It remains the most persistent problem. Till date most efforts to reform the electoral system have been taken by EC and the Supreme Court (SC) only. It is parliament's responsibility to amend the Representation of People Act 1951, which deals with disqualification of candidates against whom charges have been proved in court for serious offences.
 - **Muscle Power and Corruption:** Use of muscle power by politicians to collect votes in their favour. Also, the use of money and other freebies in form of cash and kind both affect the final results of the election to a large extent.
 - **Model Code of Conduct:** Its blatant violation is seen in almost all elections.
 - **Limited Awareness:** Making voters aware of candidates with criminal antecedents has its limitations.
 - **Lack of Governance:** The SC's orders or other legal mechanisms are not fully followed thereby creating an anarchic environment in the country. Law breakers end up becoming law makers.
 - **Polarisation Towards Caste/Religions:** People still go by the caste system and favour candidates on its basis instead of considering the actual background of the candidate.

Law Commission Reports

- The Law commission in its 179th report recommended an amendment to the Representation of people act 1951.
 - It suggested the people with criminal backgrounds should be disqualified for five years or until acquittal.
 - It also recommended that the person who wants to contest the election must furnish details regarding any pending case, with the copy of the FIR/complaint, and also

furnish details of all assets. But no action was taken on the recommendation by the government due to a lack of consensus amongst the political parties.

Supreme Court's Observations

- It is mandatory for all political parties to publish all details regarding pending criminal cases against their chosen candidates, not only in local newspapers, but also on party websites and social media handles.
- Directions to ensure the asset disclosure and criminal records of candidates.
- Establishment of special courts in all States for the quick disposal of cases involving elected representatives.

3. Inter-State Council

Recently, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister insisted that the Inter-State Council meetings should be held at least thrice in a year.

Reason and other demands

- To strengthen the spirit of cooperative federalism.
- Bills of national importance should be placed before the Council before being tabled in Parliament.
- There is no “effective and interactive communication” between the states and the Centre on issues of common interest.
- The Council has met only once in the last six years — and that there has been no meeting since July 2016.
- Since its constitution in 1990, the body has met only 11 times, although its procedure states it should meet at least three times every year.

Inter State Council

- **Origin:** It is a mechanism that was constituted to support Centre-State and Inter-State coordination and cooperation in India.
- **Article 263:** The Inter-State Council was established under Article 263 of the Constitution, which states that the President may constitute such a body if a need is felt for it.
- **Objective:** The Council is basically meant to serve as a forum for discussions among various governments.
- **Sarkaria Commission:** In 1988, the Commission suggested the Council should exist as a permanent body, and in 1990 it came into existence through a Presidential Order.

4. India - EU Free Trade Agreement

Recently, India and EU re-launched Free Trade Agreement negotiations after 9-years in a joint event held at the EU headquarters in Brussels.

About the recent event at Brussels

- Negotiations were also launched for a stand-alone Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) and a Geographical Indicators (GIs) Agreement.
 - IPA would provide a legal framework for cross-border investments to enhance the confidence of investors.
 - GI pact is expected to establish a transparent and predictable regulatory environment, to facilitate trade of GI products including handicrafts and agri-commodities.

Significance of the India-EU FTA

- **Principle of fairness:** Both sides are aiming for the trade negotiations to be broad-based, balanced and comprehensive, based on the principles of fairness and reciprocity.
- **Immense benefits:** Considering that both partners have similar fundamental values and common interests and are two of the largest open market economies, the trade deal will help to diversify and secure the supply chains, boost economic opportunities for our businesses, and bring significant benefits to the people.
- **Political terms**

- **From the EU's perspective** the free trade agreement (FTA) with India will support the EU's aim of employing FTAs to foster partner countries' integration into the world economy, and will strengthen its role in global trade governance.
- **From India's perspective**, it will boost the "Make in India" campaign and the ambition to establish India as a regional leader and global manufacturing centre.
- **Global economic power**: FTA will strengthen India's attempts to harness its growing domestic economy and middle class to support its rise as a global economic power.
- **Economic terms**: a well-negotiated agreement will boost trade and investment flows between the two regions. The EU is India's main source of technology transfer.
- **Smart cities**: The EU's assistance would enable European companies to help India in its plan to develop 100 smart cities in the near future, as well as helping other Indian initiatives.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. What is Scientific Social Responsibility? Do you think India needs a policy on Scientific Social Responsibility? (150 words)

Introduction

Scientific Social Responsibility can be defined as "the ethical obligation of knowledge workers in all fields of science and technology to voluntarily contribute their knowledge and resources to the widest spectrum of stakeholders in society, in a spirit of service and conscious reciprocity".

New India with its vibrant young populace is a country of ambition and aspiration which requires a renewed emphasis on the integration of science and technology with society at both the institutional and individual levels. Therefore the policy of Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) which seeks to facilitate easy access to resources and knowledge, would turn out to be a significant step in the right direction.

India is going to be the first country in the world to implement a Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) Policy on the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to encourage science and technology (S&T) institutions and individual scientists in the country to proactively engage in science outreach activities to connect science with society.

Body

Why India needs a policy on scientific social responsibility -

- To encourage science and technology (S&T) institutions and individual scientists in the country to proactively engage in science outreach activities to connect science with society.
- To harness the latent potential of the scientific community for strengthening linkages between science and society, and for making the S&T ecosystem vibrant.
- To develop a mechanism for ensuring access to scientific knowledge, transferring benefits of science to meet societal needs, promoting collaborations to identify problems and develop solutions.
- To facilitate actions towards addressing Technology Vision 2035 Prerogatives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the country such as water, ecology, health, and livelihood.
- To empower women, disadvantaged and weaker sections of society through scientific interventions.
- To help MSMEs, Startups and Informal sector enterprises in increasing their overall productivity.
- To facilitate scientific intervention in rural innovation.

The policy envisages strengthening science-society linkages in an organic manner by building synergy among all the stakeholders so as to usher in a cultural change in the conduct of science for the benefit of society at large in the country.

Conclusion

When most research is being done by using taxpayers' money, the scientific establishment has an ethical obligation of "giving back" to society. "SSR is not only about the scientific impact upon society but also about the social impact on science. SSR would, therefore, strengthen the knowledge ecosystem and bring efficiencies in harnessing science for the benefit of society".

QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements.

1. Election Commission of India is not only responsible for conducting free and fair elections but it also renders a quasi-judicial function between the various political parties.
2. Both the number and tenure of the Election Commissioners are decided by the Chief Election Commissioner.
3. The appointment of Election Commissioners falls within the purview of Article 324 of the Constitution.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) **1 and 3 only** (d) 2 and 3 only

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Ghaghara river originates near Mansarovar Lake, Tibet, and is the longest river in Nepal.
2. Tila, Seti, and Beri are the tributaries of the river which meets the Ganges at Digha in the state of West Bengal.

Select the correct statement(s)

- (a) **1 only** (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Consider the following statements with respect to Critical Information Infrastructure (CII):

1. It is a computer resource, destruction of which shall impact national security, economy, public health, or safety.
2. The IT Act 2000, gives the central government the power to declare any data, IT network, or communications infrastructure as CII.

Select the correct statement(s)

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2

4. consider the following statements

1. India is the largest sugar producer in the world.
2. The Sugar Development Fund was established through an act of parliament to provide loans at nominal rate of interest to Sugar mills.
3. According to WTO rules, the export subsidies provided by the government to the sugar mills cannot exceed 50% of the total value of sugar production.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

- (a) **2 only** (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Consider the following statements :

1. The Ministerial Conference (MC) meets biannually, and according to its rules, any member can exercise a veto.
2. All members of the WTO are involved in the MC and they can take decisions on all matters covered under any multilateral trade agreements

Select the correct statement(s)

- (a) 1 only (b) **2 only** (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2